

## ***Building a Foundation***

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### **The issue:**

When "healthy" relationships exist between home and school, teachers and parents value the expertise that each of them bring to the situation. When parents and teachers work together to build the foundation of a team, everybody benefits. As a parent, what can you do to contribute to your child's class or school, and what are some ways you can value and support the talents that the teacher brings to the classroom?

### **The solution:**

First, let's consider why a teacher might not rush to tap the resources of a willing parent, or might have trouble thinking of a parent as a member of a team. A teacher might be wary of this "free service" if he has had a bad experience with parents in the past. Parents who force themselves on a teacher, who intrude on a teacher's personal life, or who work themselves into the classroom with a personal gripe or "agenda" are not likely to be regarded by a teacher as a valuable asset.

If you sense some resistance, move slowly, but persist, showing your child's teacher that you can *really* be a team player. Let the teacher know that you want to be informed about what's going on in the classroom, and let him know how you might help. You might even volunteer to be the editor of a student-produced class newsletter, so all parents can stay informed about classroom activities.

You and other parents can support the teacher in a variety of ways -- by chaperoning field trips, preparing specialized materials for students, or even creating learning centers which focus on a certain topic or theme. You can generate a survey form on which parents (at an open house, in a school newsletter, or a school's Internet site) can indicate their willingness to share a talent, some information, a service, or a product with the school. If you have the time and energy, you might develop and coordinate a pool of parents who can help out in a variety of ways. A creative building principal might even be able to find a grant that could pay you to put together a dependable parent-support network.

Help your child's teacher put his or her best skills to work in the classroom. By assisting with various non-teaching functions, you can give the teacher more time to be creative in the classroom. Every teacher wants a teammate who can do that!